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Our Ocean Future

Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Meridian Institute - Joint Ocean Commission Initiative Stakeholder Roundtable

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Good morning,

This is my first engagement in this visit of mine to the United States. I am delighted it should be here, with you, and I thank the organizers for their timely initiative.

The Joint Ocean Commission's latest report is called: "*America's Ocean Future*".

It is an excellent text, and as I was reading it, I couldn't help noticing the similarities between the problems we are facing on either side of the Atlantic – and how we came up with the same ideas to solve them.

On both sides of the Atlantic, we are promoting an integrated approach to seas and oceans.

On both sides of the Atlantic, the scientific community and the high technology industry face few greater challenges.

On both sides of the Atlantic, economic conditions and fiscal austerity make matters worse.

The report should really be called "*America and Europe's Ocean Future*", or better still: "*The Planet's Ocean Future*".

Much like the National Oceans Policy of the US, the European Union's response to these challenges is now trying to be an Integrated Maritime Policy. A policy that strives to harness the potential of the sea to deliver smart and sustainable growth for the twenty-first century.

We have extracted all we could from the land and we are set on an irreversible path to a low-carbon economy.

It's time to go back to the sea.

A return to the sea can create the high-value jobs that our young people are rightly asking for. It can regenerate coastal communities, it can ensure Europe's food and energy security and it can improve our competitiveness in emerging industries. **This is our blue growth policy.** It is also a corner stone to achieve our goals for **climate change**. Oceans are significant absorbers of carbon; ocean circulation influences the mildness or severity of terrestrial seasons.

The energy sector is the perfect example.

The oil spill accident in the Gulf of Mexico... the power plant failure in Japan after the tsunami... these terrible accidents are speaking volumes.

They are saying: enough with dangerous, polluting technologies! Look for new sources of clean and permanent energy instead!

Europe has been in favour of renewable energy for a long time. In 2009, we committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent, have 20 percent of energy come from renewables, and use 20 percent less energy – all this by 2020.

And we are moving forward. The massive expansion of offshore wind farms that we are planning over the next decade can deliver not only green energy, but also platforms that provide valuable space for an expansion of aquaculture or bio-fuel production. Industrial interest and political commitment for wind power are finally starting to converge, particularly in the North Sea. This is delivering much-needed economic benefits at a time of recession and at the same time contributing to the 20-20-20 targets.

We also want to push forward wave and tide energy, which complement wind energy by providing a more predictable supply. Other offshore renewable energies, such as ocean thermal energy conversion and salinity gradient, are more expensive

because of their earlier stage of development, but can deliver clean energy and economic benefits.

In Europe, the industry reckons that, in the long term, ocean energy has the potential to satisfy 15 percent of the European electricity demand.

If we want them to deliver, they have to receive appropriate public support now.

Sure, huge investments will be needed to be able to bring offshore and marine energy onshore – to consumers; but those investments will be compensated by the savings on our fossil fuel bill, which is only bound to increase in the future; plus they will create high-quality jobs in our nations.

Europe is already putting money into **innovation**. On top of what Member States themselves do, the EU research programme spends approximately 360 million euro per year on research on themes such as marine environment, maritime transport, marine energy, and fisheries. Europe has also promising sites for mining deep-sea minerals, but more research is clearly needed for complete protection of the ecosystems that could be affected.

We have also asked for proposals for projects that cut across all themes under the oceans of tomorrow initiative.

We also encourage policy research and debate about EU-US relations. A call for proposals has been launched by our Washington office for people like yourselves: US-based think-tanks, research centers, non-profit organizations, NGOs and the like. I strongly encourage you to submit proposals on fisheries or ocean affairs.

For the next financial period starting in 2013-2014, the Commission has proposed a budget of 80 billion euro for research and innovation funding - an increase of 46 percent over the previous period. And we will make it as easy as possible for small and medium enterprises to access this funding.

Innovation is built on **knowledge**. The statement that 'we know more about the surface of the moon than the bottom of the sea' has been made many times but it is still valid. So the first thing we need to do is satisfy our marine and maritime knowledge and data needs.

Here too, your challenge – fragmented observation systems under different Agencies and regional bodies – is exactly the same as ours. You may be aware that at end of last year I launched the "*Marine Knowledge 2020*" initiative to establish a network of accessible, compatible and timely data about the status of our seas and oceans, so that our policy-making is based on our best science.

We also adopted roadmap for a common information sharing environment in the field of **maritime surveillance**.

The objective of integrating surveillance activities and pooling exhaustive and up-to-date information is to improve maritime safety and security: a prerequisite for every economic activity at sea and a fundamental component of private investment choices.

We have seen it in New Orleans; we have seen it in Vendée, in France: the growing urban concentrations on the coasts, the greenhouse gas emissions and the rapidly disappearing ecosystems make coastal zones especially vulnerable to atmospheric conditions.

We calculate that reducing uncertainty in future sea-level by 25 percent can save Europe 100 million euro a year in sea defenses!

We are also currently speaking with NOAA and other partners about creating a joined-up observation system that fills gaps and avoids duplication.

This will help reduce climate change uncertainty. And it is another good opportunity for transatlantic cooperation.

One of the topics of our debate today is advanced integrated ocean management approaches. Here I would like to mention the regional strategies that the EU has developed: the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Arctic... Each of Europe's seas presents different issues and opportunities, so tailored strategies need to be worked out for each.

At this point we are working on a **strategy for the Atlantic Ocean** which we will launch in November in Lisbon, Portugal. This is a new challenge that cannot be limited to European action: it requires cooperation among all the coastal States around the Atlantic and within global fora. The strategy has to be elaborated with our partners. USA and Canada first of all. It shows how high transatlantic cooperation is on the EU's agenda.

The strategy will highlight the particular opportunities that the planet's second largest ocean can offer. Our aim is to help our Maritime Policy and your Ocean Policy deliver tangible results for the people in Atlantic coastal regions.

Of course all ocean affairs can benefit from a global outlook. In this particular case, we have identified a number of key areas that can especially benefit from accrued trans-Atlantic maritime cooperation.

For instance: observation, science and data sharing; deep-sea research; joint environmental stewardship to protect marine ecosystems and marine biodiversity and to mitigate climate change impacts; maritime monitoring and surveillance, to address jointly safety and security issues at sea; and so on.

Science, innovation and technology transfer require stimulus, large investments and state-of-the-art technology. The public sector needs the help and the active involvement of researchers, entrepreneurs and environmental NGOs.

The USA and the EU are neighbours; we share a common maritime history and numberless economic links. It is only legitimate that we should be sharing the work, the risks and, later, the rewards.

So I hope that it will be well received on this side of the Atlantic too. I am confident we will all play an active role in the building of a dynamic and sustainable Atlantic blue economy.

To conclude, ladies and gentlemen, oceans policy, green economy, sustainability and environmental governance are very high on Europe's political agenda.

We are keen to work with the USA on the development of the technology and procedures needed to make ocean energy a commercial reality. There is no other way. We are also keen to work on a common strategy for the ocean we share. We have to work together.

Let's face it, ladies and gentlemen, it is after all "Our Ocean Future".

The floor is yours.